

# Where New York's Matrimonial Mill Grinds Out Its Grist

## One Man Performed 14,000 Ceremonies Last Year in the Municipal Building

By Fred B. Pitney

ON AN average one-third of the couples that take out marriage licenses on the second floor of the Municipal Building go up to the third floor and get married in the Municipal Marriage Chapel. And there are some points in favor of that way of doing it. It is cheap. The whole operation costs \$3—\$1 for the license and \$2 for the ceremony. Tips are not allowed. It saves time. One may enter the Municipal Building at 11:30 a. m. in single blessedness and depart at 1 p. m. in married bliss. Curious crowds are avoided and secrecy may be secured without the asking. Rice and romance are lacking.

Seventy-seven couples were married in the Municipal Building on June 1. It constituted a record for June 1 for the Manhattan marriage chapel, and a new record was made in all the five boroughs for that day. There were 150 weddings in the various municipal marriage chapels, while 566 marriage licenses were issued, 273 of them in Manhattan. Last year there were seventy-one weddings in the Manhattan chapel on June 1. Way back in 1916 there were only fifty-five. Matrimony is getting more popular in New York every year.

### The June Habit

Tommy Douglas, verger of the Manhattan chapel, has passed 60,000 of these venturesome couples through his hands and knows a thing or two about marriage and the reasons therefor. He is tall and equally thin, wears a King Charles mustache and has deep hollows in his cheeks and emphatic parentheses framing his mouth. He collects \$2 from prospective bridegrooms as though he were imposing a fine.

"Why do people get married on the first of June?" an inquisitive visitor asked him.

"They don't," he replied. "They get married on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. Friday is an off day. Tuesday and Wednesday are slow. But we have 'em every day."

"I've seen you before," he accused.

"Yes," the visitor admitted. "I was a witness to a wedding here."

"I know it," said Tommy. "I recognized you when you came in. People get married in June because

it's a habit. Somebody started it and they keep it up. Lots of people think it's the law. They get married on the first of June just because they can't wait any longer. They think they have to wait for June, and when the first of June comes they come down here and get married. They're free then and they can get married if they want to."

"Well, why did more people get married on June 1 this year than last year?"

"Bigger town," said Tommy.

"More people in it."

"That's not romantic," said his visitor.

"Prosperity," said Tommy.

"When I was here before," said the visitor, "you got up from your desk to deliver a lecture on the delight of kissing a beautiful woman and you illustrated it with suitable gestures."

A Lecture on Kissing

"How did your wife like it?" asked Tommy.

"She thought it was a good lecture."

"She liked me, eh?"

"I said she thought it was a good lecture."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Tommy.

"These people that are getting married this year think they've got it figured out how to beat the landlord. It's this way. Emma is living at home with her mother and the rest of the family. The landlord boosts the rent. Emma and Tommy are engaged, so they come down here and get married. Tommy goes home with Emma, and Ella, who has been sleeping with Emma, is kicked out of Emma's bed and goes to sleep with one of the other sisters. Tommy takes her place and on Saturday night adds his cut to the family pile. That's the idea. No more room required and one more to divide the expenses."

Tommy Douglas is romantic just like a hyena.

"Let's pass that," said the visitor.

"Why are Monday, Thursday and Saturday the busy days?"

"Monday," Tommy explained, "is the first day of the week. They talk it over on Sunday and come down here Monday. Saturday is a Jewish holiday. They can get married Saturday without taking a day off."

"But you close at noon on Saturday, don't you?"

"You said it," replied Tommy.

"The Jews kept me here until quarter-past three last Saturday, marrying 'em. I wish they'd make Friday their holiday."

"And what about Thursday?"

"That's Italian day. The Italians



THIS couple had nothing to say for publication about the H. C. of L. She said they had been too crazy about each other to think of it. He was heard to mutter something about somebody trying "to take the joy out of life."

think it's lucky to be married in the City Hall on Thursday."

"You make this subject extremely interesting," said the visitor. "Why do people choose this place to get married in?"

### Just to Get Married

"They have all kinds of reasons," Tommy replied, "but it's mostly because they want to get married. Sometimes, it's because they have to. We have a lot of foreigners come here, and over there, you know, they have to have a civil ceremony before they have the religious one. Of course, we don't have to have that here, but the old folks that were born on the other side don't know that. The young folks born here understand how it is, but they come down here and have the civil ceremony to please the old folks."

A young couple came in and Tommy ground them through the mill. They had no witnesses with them and the visitor remarked to Tommy:

"I thought there had to be two witnesses to a marriage here."

"There does," said Tommy, "but they don't always bring their witnesses with them. Then we," indicating his assistant, "act as witnesses. You can't always tell why people are getting married. Maybe, they don't want any witnesses."



THOUGH you would never guess it, Jack and Ethel are eloping



THE only English words Tony knows are "yes" and "shine." Tony exhausted half of his vocabulary every time he was asked a question.

making trouble over a marriage or just because people have got married. The only way of knowing about that is to know why they get married, and you've got to ask questions to find out about that. We don't ask any questions and we don't answer any. We just tell 'em if they



EVERYTHING but happiness is being registered on the bench in the waiting room



THE deputy city clerk who marries 'em by wholesale

We don't ask any questions. They've got their license, and that's all we want."

"But the records are public, aren't they?" asked the visitor.

"Sure," said Tommy.

"And anybody can come in here and ask if So-and-so and So-and-so were married and when?"

"Sure," said Tommy.

"And you tell them?"

### Tell Them Nothing

"Tell them nothing," said Tommy.

"How do we know what they are asking for? They may be only curious and they may want to make trouble. There's lots of ways of

don't like it, what are they going to do about it?"

"Tommy," said the visitor, "you have just about succeeded in eliminating the romance from the holy bonds of wedlock."

"There isn't anything holy about it down here," Tommy interrupted, "but it's legal."

"However," the visitor continued, "there is one more chance. Why is it that dark-haired men marry blondes and the other way about?"

"They don't," said Tommy. "At least, some do and some don't, but most of 'em don't. It depends on how they feel about it. When a young fellow likes a girl he don't

## Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays the Favorite Days for Marrying; June First's Popularity

look at the color of her hair or her eyes; at least, not before they're married. Afterward he may look at it a whole lot and talk about it, too. Besides, what can you tell about the color of a girl's hair these days? All you can tell is the color they show you, and they can make it anything they like. If a girl wants to land a young fellow and she thinks he likes blondes, she'll be a blonde, and if she thinks he likes dark hair she'll have dark hair. You can't tell anything about it by looking at them, any more than you can tell what their skin is like underneath their complexions. But why don't you see Mr. Cruise? He's the expert on marrying."

### The Marriage Route

Tommy's business is to make out the certificate. The process of marriage at the Municipal Building is as follows:

Thirty minutes or thereabouts are spent in the city clerk's office on the second floor, answering questions and getting the license, for which \$1 is paid. The candidates then ascend one flight and appear before Tommy Douglas and hand him the license. He fills out a blank from the information contained in the license and says to the bridegroom, "Sign here."

The bridegroom, the bride and the witnesses sign and Tommy says, "Two dollars." The bridal party then files into a large, gloomy, bare walled room furnished with half a dozen rosewood banquettes. Usually fifteen or twenty minutes are

mounted by a wreath of white artificial flowers. Mr. Cruise sits at the desk like Bacchus enthroned and drones out the marriage lines. A single electric lamp in the ceiling furnishes the light. Ventilation is dispensed with. In front of the desk there is room for the bridal couple and three or four witnesses. Five witnesses would crowd the chapel uncomfortably.

### Married 14,000 Couples

Mr. Cruise is Deputy City Clerk and in that capacity performs most of the marriages, though City Clerk P. J. Scully officiates occasionally. Last year Mr. Cruise married something over 14,000 couples, while Mr. Scully performed about 1,000 ceremonies. The marriage chapel has been in existence four years, since the Legislature at Albany took the right to perform marriages away from the members of the Board of Aldermen. But though the Legislature provided a municipal marriage chapel, it did not provide a form for the ceremony. Hence Mr. Scully wrote one himself, and here it is, the husky monologue that has made 60,000 couples man and wife in the Municipal Building during the last four years:

"IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN.

"Do either of you know of any reason why you both should not be legally joined in marriage? Or, if there be any one present who can show any just cause why these parties should not be legally joined to-



THE clerk's solemn grand finale is very impressive

gether, let him now speak or hereafter hold his peace.

"Do you, —, take this woman as your lawfully wedded wife to live together in the state of matrimony? Will you love, honor and keep her, as a faithful man is bound to do, in health, sickness, prosperity and adversity, and, forsaking all others, keep you alone unto her as long as you both shall live?"

"Do you, —, take this man as your lawfully wedded husband to live together in the state of matrimony? Will you love, honor and cherish him, as a faithful woman is bound to do, in health, sickness, prosperity and adversity, and, forsaking all others, keep you alone unto him, as long as you both shall live?"

"For as you both have consented in wedlock and have acknowledged it before this company, I do, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of New York now pronounce you husband and wife. And may God bless your union."

## Equal Rights in Sport

ENGLISH WOMEN are now fighting their battles for equality on the fields of sport.

At this time of year England loses her dark, damp dress of winter and suddenly becomes transformed into one vast green playground. Every city square and country field is the scene of the many outdoor games with which English men and women love to fill the hours between 5 o'clock and dark.

A larger part than ever before is being played by English women in the sports of this particular spring of 1920, and it seems as if they were trying to show the men, by their skill, endurance and good sportsmanship in this field of activity, that their claims for equal rights are justified. They are meeting the men on their own grounds and at least making them work hard for victory.

On the beautiful course of the Stoke Poges Golf Club the champion women golfers recently played the champions among the men. I was among a gallery of about a hundred enthusiasts who followed the play of Miss Cecil Leitch against R. H. de Montmorency, a plus 5 man. So equal and steady were the shots of both that it was quite impossible to say which would win until the match was nearly over, and when Miss Leitch was beaten on the sixteenth green one felt that it was the ever-present element of luck rather than any lack of skill which had caused it.

In the afternoon there was a two-ball foursome match in which Miss Leitch and her sister Mary played against Mr. Wethered and Mr. Tolley, of the Oxford University team, and in this match the ladies gave one very striking example of good

sportsmanship which is worth relating.

It was on the twelfth hole, I think, that the ladies' ball lay about five feet and the men's ball about two feet from the hole, each side needing to drop their putt for a halved hole. The men magnanimously suggested conceding both putts and calling it a halved hole. But Miss Cecil Leitch said, "No, we'll put it out." Miss Mary Leitch, whose turn it was, hesitated, but seeing her sister was firm, she said, "All right, you are master," and, stepping up to the ball, sank the five-foot putt. Then the men missed their short putt and the ladies won the hole. And the professional of the club who was watching the match said, with a twinkle in his eye, "There you are; always put it out—that's my theory."

English women are also going in for the more vigorous games. There are women's lacrosse and hockey teams which play every week end before large crowds, and now we have women playing football. Recently 25,000 people gathered to see an English women's football team play a team of French girls who had come to England for a series of matches. The English team won and at the end of the game the two captains kissed each other, showing that there was good feeling and femininity to the end. The fact that these teams are composed chiefly of business girls who have only evenings and Saturdays in which to practice does not prevent them from playing a fast and interesting game.

And at tennis, the best loved game of all over here, women long ago established themselves in the first ranks and are holding their own. Of course, when one turns from the top ranks to the realm of the average players one finds women even more active in maintaining their claims for equal rights by the old adage, "Actions speak louder than words."